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Limbo Limbo Limbo

Lauren Nicole D'Ottavio
Bard College, ld1626@bard.edu

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Limbo Limbo Limbo

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by
Lauren D'Ottavio

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my wonderful professors in the Theater & Performance department for their guidance and inspiration. Two in particular who helped to evolve my work on this project are Lynn Hawley and Miriam Felton-Dansky. I would also like to thank my artistic partner and co-director, Ayla Miller, who I couldn't have imagined working with anyone but on this project. To our cast- Max, Jewel, Leon, Ariel and Emily- I adore you all and will always remember the special bond that we all shared during this process. Last, but not least, I would like to thank my parents and my family and friends for their ongoing love and support. I could not have done any of this without you.

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Chapter 1: Research and Preparation

As I was approaching the deadline for submitting senior project proposals this time last spring, I wanted to figure out what it was that I wanted to create, as a culminating project as a Theater & Performance major at Bard College. Having been exposed to many different kinds of theater, such as the history of Brechtian and Greek theater, devised and traditional theater making, such as the teachings of Lecoq and Bogart, I wanted to pull different pieces of my experience being educated through the department to create my final project.

Having been inspired performance wise by certain classes in particular, it helped me to begin to formulate my own philosophy in theater performance and the creation of work. In Geoff Sobelle's "Theater Making" class that I took during the Spring semester of my sophomore year, we came to a final moderation project through devised exercises and group collaboration. Coming from a primarily traditional theater background, the idea of devised theater making came to me at a surprise at first and took me some time to adjust and be open to this type of practice. I feel that over the course of the semester, as I began to let my guard down and became less worried about what other people were thinking of my performance. I also began to see the importance and relevance of this kind of exercise, and how it brought a new freedom and creativity to the work. I knew that I wanted to combine both my traditional training with this new training in devising and to establish a group dynamic with whomever I was collaborating with.

With the new idea formulated by the 2016 Theater & Performance class, and the basis being creating one unified project, we came up with the idea of finding a common text to help reach this goal. Debating between several source texts, from Kafka and Molière, we settled on "Inferno" by Dante Alighieri. Since the text was broken up into several different circles, we decided for each senior to pick a circle that spoke the most to them. I liked Limbo the most for many different reasons, most of which were connected to my interest in the feelings

of stuckness and non-belonging, that I also had related to at various points in my personal life. It was the end of a four year relationship two weeks before the commencement of my moderation performance and I remember not knowing whether or not I would be able to perform or what would happen next. Also having an emergency surgery to have a cyst removed after the first week of classes this past fall made me unsure as to whether or not I would be able to recover and continue with the semester. These personal set-backs made me ponder on what Dante was getting at when writing about situations the evoked similar feelings of non-belonging and acceptance of the unknown for the characters in this circle.

Once we had decided on what circle fit best to us all individually, we connected with the other seniors that chose the same one. Ayla Miller was the other senior that also chose Limbo, and we both had similar interests and ideas that inspired us from the circle, and so she and I decided to work together. There were specific parts of the text that interested us, such as the fact that those who end up in Limbo have not actually committed any crimes. They are referred to as “Virtuous Pagans,” by Virgil, who leads Dante on his journey through hell. He says, “I wish you to know before you travel on that these were sinless. And still their merits fail, for they lacked Baptism’s grace.” The only reason why they are in hell is because for whatever reason, they were not Baptized, perhaps because they were born before Jesus was, and before the Christian faith was established. It could also be because they were of a different, non-Christian denomination or were children who died at birth.¹ Both Ayla and I were enthralled by this and both wanted to explore ways to incorporate this strangeness into our piece.

We presented our idea to the department during a meeting where each of us had ideas and questions in mind. I remember the question about transitions being asked, and how we

¹ Alighieri, Dante. *The Inferno*. Ciardi, John, trans. New York: Signet Classics. 1982.

would find a way to tie in all ten projects to make it into one unified piece. This is something all of us seniors continued to grapple with as we progressed in the process.

The next step in the process was to find our other collaborators, which in our case, would be our actors. Certain groups knew that they wanted to be the sole actors in their piece, such as Circles 2-4, "Lust," "Gluttony," and "Greed," and others already had their actor(s) chosen, such as Circle 7, "Heresy." Others wanted to hold auditions to find additional actors, which is the position that Ayla and I found ourselves in during early September when this discussion began. As a group, we set up three different times for auditions to be held, where we came up with an agenda for the evenings of.

First, we had the large group, of about thirty people each day, do a viewpoints exercise, where they were placed on a "grid" and could walk around the room in a neutral body, where the only restrictions were walking backwards or walking on a diagonal. After being in their neutral bodies for some time, the prompter (one of us seniors) would then add in other elements, such as allowing different speeds, from stopping to a full run, and also different levels, such as the ability to crawl or walk in releve.

I was first introduced to this technique during Geoffrey Sobelle's "Theater Making" class during my sophomore year. Upon researching the origins of this technique, I discovered that it was first developed by choreographer Mary Overlie in the 1970's and was soon after adopted for the stage by Anne Bogart. The practice is used to explore an actor's physical movements and gesture, as a way to make them more present in the space that they are working. This technique has stayed with me since I was first introduced to it, and is something that we also began each of our Limbo rehearsals with.

After we had the auditioners do viewpoints in smaller groups for about twenty minutes, we then kept them in the said smaller groups and had them do a physical warm-up, where they were prompted to become different shapes for ideas, such as "imagine your limbs

are glass,” or “the room is on fire.” I was also curious what kind of technique this came from, and found out it was created by Jacques Lecoq, who was a French mime, actor and acting instructor in the twentieth century. His teaching methods were routed in wanting the actor to discover their own ways in doing something on stage, rather than in telling them to do something, and he was very interested in his actors to discover the theater making that was most suited for them, primarily through their physicality.² I found watching the auditioners do this type of exercise to be extremely satisfying and informative, because even though a specific prompt was given, the way in which each individual went about it was completely unique and creative.

The last task that we had our auditioners perform was a small group scene where they had to have moment's of each of the following: brutality and/or compassion, silence, and song. This was also extremely interesting to watch, as depending on the groupings, they formed their own dynamic and utilized each other's strengths. Also, since we only gave them five minutes to come up with a scene no longer than two minutes, we were really able to see how they reacted under pressure, which was important for us when choosing a cast.

After the entire auditioning process was over, we were overwhelmed by the amount of talent, and had to come to a very difficult decision of choosing a select few people out of the ninety impressive candidates. Ayla and I held callbacks, where we invited about thirty people for the second round of the casting process. There was a bit of an issue arising around the question of casting, which was due to the inevitable fact that certain actors would be cast in more than one senior project piece. To try and avoid the nightmarish situation of fighting with each other for overlapping rehearsals, and also to respect our actors them and not ask them to spread themselves too thin, we as a group decided that if there were actors cast in more than two pieces, we would discuss it and see whether the other group was willing to

² Lecoq, Jacques. *Theatre of movement and gesture*. Routledge, 2006.

budge and accept a backup. Because of this, Ayla and I had at least two people that we were considering for each “role,” some of which were more concrete than others at this point in the process.

During our callbacks, we asked the actors to first do a vocal warm-up, as we knew at this point that our piece would involve music and we needed actors who could sing or at least hold pitch. We then had them read selections from our script, and asked certain people to read for certain parts, such as males to read for the “Virgil” role and females for our third leading role. We also choreographed and taught a short sixteen bar swing dancing routine, since we had an idea that that would be a part our piece as well, for my character and one other male character in particular.

Chapter 2: Creation

As we were coming to the close of the Spring 2015 semester, it was time to start creating, through brainstorming and collaboration. I at this point had developed my own ideas about what I wanted the piece to be about, which was a wedding in Limbo where three old friends were seated at the same table and were complaining about what was going on, such as the food and the weather. I also knew that I wanted these three older women, perhaps ranging in age from their mid sixties to early eighties, to all have ended up in Limbo for very different reasons, and to have their pasts revealed through staged flash backs. I definitely wanted the piece to overall be a comedy, but for there to be sentimental and poignant moments throughout.

In addition to the idea of the piece being a wedding in Limbo, I wondered about the involvement of music. I wasn't sure at the time if having a wedding band would be possible during the final product, but was told by our adviser at the time, Lynn Hawley, to be open and unlimited in the early stages and that the possibility or unavailability of certain elements

could be dealt with further down the line. This also got me thinking about the possibility of writing solos for certain characters, and to have a few ensemble numbers.

Lynn met with Ayla and I, both individually and together, where she gave us helpful insight into the ways in which we could go about this process. She shared her own creative and artistic experiences, where she said there was instance where she collaborated with another person, and when it came to writing, they essentially alternated writing each scene. She was not saying that this was our only option, but just to show how there was a way for each creator to both have their own say and input, which can be difficult when collaborating. Lynn also suggested that in the early stages, as well as throughout, we keep a journal, and write down anything that inspires us or speaks to us. She said to maybe also keep a bulletin board to collect images or materials that we found striking in any way. As we left for the summer, Ayla and I decided that we would be in frequent contact and would also send each other updates whenever we found new ideas to share.

Very soon after the end of the Spring 2015 semester, I left for Italy with my Intensive Italian class to study for a month in Sicily. I kept in mind what Lynn had said about keeping a journal and would write in it at the end of each day. After re-reading my journal recently, I realized what things I had written down had affected different aspects of the play. For example, one of our characters was inspired by an older woman that I met when I was sitting down in an Italian “bar,” similar to a coffee shop or bakery in the United States. This woman was seated a few tables down from mine with another man, assumedly her husband, and at another table across the way sat another older man, who was by himself. The woman kept glancing at him when her husband wasn’t looking, and I even think I caught her wink at him a few times.

This experience sparked the idea of creating a character who was flirtatious during their lifetime, and who maybe would have wanted to have multiple partners and be in an open

relationship, but never actually let herself do so. This idea ended up becoming more developed, becoming Patsy Adora, who was played by Emily Kuper. Even though Emily put her own spin on this role, it makes me happy to know that some of the inspiration for this character came from an unexpected afternoon in a cafe across the world.

Inspiration for another character in the piece came about after news of the many robberies of local bakeries and grocery stores in Sicily because of how expensive the food was in the town that I was living in. This originally gave me the idea of writing for a character that was a kleptomaniac, possibly someone that robs grocery stores or jewelry boutiques. I also wasn't sure if this was a sin that would place someone in Limbo, or to a circle lower into hell, but if the person was non-violent, it could possibly be fitting for a character stuck in Circle 1.

This initial idea eventually transformed into one of our leading characters, Moriah, played by Ayla, who did have an addiction problem, but was not stealing, per say. She constantly lusts after cake, that of pineapple upside down cake to be exact. It fed her both physically and mentally, as there were events in her past, that kept her searching for ways to fill the void, such as growing up with an abusive mother. The most common ways she coped was with sweets, which met her temporary cravings for fulfillment.

I kept thinking more about psychological sins, and when researching, read a lot about pride in Morton Bloomfield's book, "The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept, with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature."³ It seems to be an overlooked sin in many cases, since it is often misinterpreted as confidence. In many scenarios, however, the people who seem overly confident and react quickly by being defensive are those that are the most insecure. They use strong opinions and judgments, both of self and others to mask their insecurity, blinding themselves to seeing what the actual route

³ Bloomfield, Morton. "The seven deadly sins: an introduction to the history of a religious concept, with special reference to medieval English literature." (1962).

of the issues are. I had an idea for one of three women to be very confident on the outside, with a permanent bad attitude, but on the inside, she is really in a lot of pain that has built up for many years. I wanted this pain to eventually erupt, where she has some sort of outburst, or revelation that makes her realize that if she wants to survive, she would need to change her ways. This idea ended up turning into our second leading female character, Virginia, played by Jewel Evans.

The inspiration for our third female leading character, which I myself acted as in the piece, came from what other type of role that I felt was needed in the play and also from various personal experiences. I wanted there to be a character who served as a kind of mediator, and also one who had a love story. I began to think about what it must be like to be sent to Limbo when your significant other got to go to heaven when they died, and this gave me the idea for Norah. She was never baptized, simply because her parents were not religious. Tying in the love story, she first is in an abusive relationship, but because this person is a Christian, believes that her sins would be forgiven if she marries him. She eventually realizes that she would rather be happy and living in sin than be miserable and go to hell.

When I was first beginning the writing process, I knew that I wanted there to be a masters of ceremonies kind of character, who would introduce new characters, and would also provide some comedic relief to the piece. This idea eventually turned into our Virgil character, when Ayla had suggested that we name the MC character Virgil, as in "Inferno," he is the character that brings Dante through hell and knows the world the best. Max Green played this role, and with more development, his role became another, if not the most central one in our piece, who bridged the gap between scenes happening in real time and those in flash back.

When we returned in late August for the beginning of the fall 2015 semester, Ayla and I met during the first week of classes to touch base and see where we both were with our ideas. I shared with her my writings from over the summer while I was in Italy and she told me about different images and ideas that she had come up with. We had been back in contact with Lynn and wanted to do a re-read of Circle 1 of “Inferno,” before we first met with her, and also met with each other before this initial meeting of the semester. After our re-read, I picked up on a lot of the symbolism present in this first circle, where it literally was a journey that Dante was being taken on, but was really about struggle and the lower you got, the harder the struggle. It was as if the characters could see beyond their time while on earth because in death they exist outside of time completely, trapped in a place that does not ever change.

I remember taking note of a part in the text where Dante explains, “No tortured wailing rose to greet us here but sounds of sighing rose from every side, sending a tremor through the timeless air.”⁴ Even though the people in Limbo were not being physically tortured, they still were in constant agony, and perhaps so perplexed with boredom and solitude in this never ending place of repetition, that they fell into a constant state of sighing. This is something that Ayla and I later explored with the cast, where we had them try making noises during the scenes in Limbo that expressed how they were feeling, being stuck in this indeterminate state.

As far as doing writing on my own, I tried to write a scene or two each week, where I would have something to share with Ayla before our meetings with Lynn every Monday. Ayla also would have something to show me, but usually was in the form of ideas or images, such as wanting there to be a staged baptism somewhere in the piece. I think that the combination of my more structured writing and her more open creative ideas complimented

⁴ Alighieri, 28.

each other well and made the writing process somewhat smooth. I did still find the thought of trying to combine our ideas to create some sort of cohesive script down the line to be challenging, but Lynn assured us that it would eventually happen in its own time.

Lynn also suggested that the creation process would be heavily influenced by our cast, and advised me to try and not get too attached to a specific part of the script and to be open to additions. At the time of our first rehearsal, which was the first week of November 2015, Ayla and I set up a negotiable schedule for the evening, to try and keep ourselves on track. We wanted to get to know our cast and each other better, so we sat in a circle and went around and said our names, how we were feeling, and if there was ever a time where we felt like we were in Limbo. I remember the responses that our cast gave being extraordinarily interesting, ranging from talking about relationships, to the education system and feeling like not only were we getting to know our cast better, but this information was helping to inform our piece.

We then did a viewpoints exercise, similarly to how we conducted the one in auditions, but gave them specific prompts addressing the ideas that we wanted to develop and discover about Limbo and the flashback world. For example, we had asked them to imagine that their bodies were very heavy, that they couldn't make eye contact, and that everyone else in the room was contaminated, for prompts in Limbo. And then when we switched over to flashback, we told them that they could touch or hug the people around them, make crazy eye contact with each person you pass and to feed off of the energy around them.

We then did a "rough staging" of the first scene, which involved establishing the world in Limbo. Looking back, I think we realized that it would have been better to read through what we had in the script so far, instead of jumping into staging, because I think it confused the cast a bit. We used this experience to modify our future rehearsals, where we would sit down in a circle and read through the scene or portion of the script that we wanted

to get through, before getting on our feet and doing it. We also set goals for each rehearsal, which we emailed the cast ahead of time, as a way to let them know what our intentions were, regardless if we got to everything on the agenda or not.

We continued to have meetings with Lynn each week, who kept us on track and gave us very helpful feedback in order to do so. She would mainly ask us questions based on the parts of the script we gave to her or ideas that we told her about that came up during rehearsals with our cast. She would ask, for example, what are the surroundings of the two different worlds, and how do they affect the people there? What are the floors and ceilings made of? What are the stakes of the world, and what are the consequences for disobeying or adhering to the rules? These were questions that we could not answer all at once, and at the time, (November 18th) we were still creating and making additions to the script, along with devising with our cast. She also picked up on our themes of not belonging and the characters not having a true home in Limbo, and she asked us why these were so important. And as for the scenes in Flashback, it was just the opposite, where the characters all seemed to know their place in the world, and had a clear purpose.

Also around this time, we set a goal for ourselves to have the script complete by Thanksgiving break, meaning that we would at least have an idea of what happens from start to finish, with room for additions or negations. We began to add in different elements to the rehearsals, added onto the basic structure, which was to check in with each other, warm up physically and vocally and then discuss what areas of the script we'd be working on. We added in music and choreography, where we would sometimes break the cast up into smaller groups. For example, if I was working with Jewel on Virginia's solo, "My Life is Worthless," then Ayla would be working on tightening up the choreography of the "Mr. and Mrs. Aeneas" song with the rest of the cast. We would also sometimes have certain people called earlier, to try and utilize everyone's time fairly. For example, if we wanted to work on a

scene with just two characters, such as the fight scene between Norah and Horace, or just work on Virgil monologues with Max, we would have the rest of the cast come an hour later.

I felt that as we held more and more rehearsals, our group dynamic became stronger, where I could see that we were forming a company among ourselves. We received some very disappointing news at the end of the fall semester, where one of our cast members needed to leave the process, after she heard that her younger brother had passed away suddenly. This was such a forceful blow, in that it affected all of us; we were desperately sad for Avalon and were also heartbroken to see her go. It truly put things into perspective for me and made me realize that even though the stress that I was feeling about this project seemed to be never ending, in the grand scheme of things, it was nothing compared to the loss of a loved one. I was inspired by Avalon's bravery, and it taught me to appreciate this incredible group of people, and to cherish the amount resources at my fingertips at this precious time of my life.

With winter break almost upon us and only one more rehearsal left on December sixteenth, we left some room for discussion at the end of it to talk about what would be happening when we returned. We told them about scheduling for February, giving them a calendar to see how many weeks we had before tech, and explaining that rehearsals would be becoming more frequent, from the twice a week schedule we had in the fall to at least three times a week. We also told them about the Indiegogo campaign, which was something that us seniors set up to try and raise additional money for costumes and props. Lastly, we told them that we would be in touch over break and would send them thoughts to keep thinking about their characters in the hopes of making the worlds more clear.

Besides being relieved at having a break, I was very nervous about having a month long separation period from our cast and from the frequent rehearsals we had been having. I was concerned that having this large chunk of downtime would leave us scrambling to pull it all together in the short amount of time we had before the show went up in February. I was

also concerned that Ayla and I were not exactly on the same page about deadlines, where I felt that we should have had the script finished by this point, whereas for her this was not a large concern. I had to tell myself though, with the help of Lynn and our new adviser, Miriam Felton-Dansky, that the break was necessary, as a time to reflect and take a step back, instead of continuing to be conducting rehearsals and writing all at the same time. Even though there was a lot of work left to be done, a month was more time than we thought it was, and actually a standard production period.

Over the winter break, I did have a lot of time to reflect and also think for what I thought still needed to be done when we got back. I was happy with how we left things with our cast and was trying to think of what to send them. I ended up emailing everyone a few different times, both separately and as a group. I emailed max a link to a comedy special of John Mulaney, who I thought had similar characteristics as Virgil and wanted to see if this could help Max with his character building. I also sent the whole cast videos, one in particular being young children talking about Jesus, which I hoped would evolve our “Baptism stories,” scene. Ayla and I were also in frequent contact and would text/email each other weekly.

Before we left for break, we also had initial concept meeting with Matthew Waldron, the Production Coordinator at the Fisher Center, and the rest of the design team. In this meeting, we had to give a presentation on what we were thinking our set, costumes, and stage lighting would look like. Although I felt the meeting went well, it also showed me that we needed to start thinking about the other production elements, and this was something that I also continued to think a lot about over break. There were many minute details to be done still, but nevertheless important when it would come to finalizing mid-February.

With the start of the Spring semester and our upcoming rehearsal to be held on January thirtieth, there were more issues arising that we did not exactly prepare for. For

example, we did not take account for the difficulty in finding a space with a piano. The only room in the Fisher Center available to us that had a piano was Resnick, and although we knew that we had it once a week during our reserved studio time, it was becoming a necessity in our rehearsals, since so much of it involved music. Alas, we ended up finding creative ways to work around it. I would try and reserve rooms in the music building through the music department, and at least one of our rehearsals each week would work out this way. On the days when we could not find a room with a piano, I would either lug my giant keyboard from where I am living in Tivoli to campus, or we would use recordings or sing the songs a cappella.

The first thing that we did during our initial rehearsal of the semester after checking in and re-greeting our cast was trying to make the transition from Scene 1 in Limbo to Scene 2 in flashback more drastic. Ayla and I had talked about what we wanted to see progress before the performances, and I think we both agreed that we wanted to make the two different worlds more defined and more contrasting. I also brought with me some props, to get us used to having other objects on stage with us, such as the radio that Ayla uses during the Baptize Me/Antichrist scene. We also wanted to start timing our scenes, as we knew that we had a lot of material and would most likely need to cut back in certain areas.

Making cuts to the material was one of the most challenging aspects of the process, in my opinion, because I had become attached to certain areas of the script, and was afraid of letting go. I knew though that we couldn't keep everything, out of the sheer fact that we only had the allotted twenty-five minute performance time. We also wanted to decided on when Miriam should start coming to rehearsals, as well as if we should have others as well, such as Abby Adler, another senior, who has lots of musical theater background and thought she could provide some helpful feedback.

On the third of February, we had a meeting with our lighting designer, Jason Boyd. We were asked to prepare a general overview of the piece, and to go scene by scene with what we wanted and needed lighting wise, such as specials, and light on the scrim. I remember Jason asking all of the groups after each circle presented what we wanted the lighting to look like in between each piece, and somehow the idea of a triangle came up, where in between each piece, a new line would appear, showing that the audience was being transported deeper into the lower circles of hell. I felt that coming to this decision was a breakthrough for all of us seniors, as it gave us a solid idea that would help to unite all of our pieces.

On the sixth of February, our adviser Miriam came to our rehearsal, where we performed essentially the first half of the piece. During the feedback that she gave Ayla and I after we dismissed our cast, she told us what she noticed. She wondered if there was a way to make the idea of a wedding more clear, perhaps through the use of balloons or centerpieces, because right then, she only knew it was a wedding because Max's character said so. She also felt that Virgil should be a more primary role, such as the narrator, to make the transitions between scenes in the two different worlds more clear. And lastly, she asked us to think about what we want to leave the audience with after the piece ends; did we want over the course of the piece to have had a major change happen in Limbo or to show that this was a never-ending cycle, where this could be shown through repetition of themes that happened in the beginning of the piece? I think Ayla and I both felt that the latter was more what we wanted and now needed to think of specific ways to make that message clear.

Miriam also pointed out that we were already around thirty minutes, and even though we stopped and started a few times, we still had a few more scenes to get to. This was very difficult to hear, as I was still holding on to different parts of the text and wasn't sure what we should get rid of. Ayla and I were also not in total agreement with when we should stop

adding new things on; I felt that by the fifteenth, which would be the last rehearsal before our stage manager, Emily, was coming to sit in, should be the absolute last day to make either additions or negations to the script. Ayla also agreed that we needed to set a time, but did not think it was completely necessary to do so by this date.

Having disagreements between us was challenging, especially because throughout the entire process, it was clear that this was not just my piece, or just Ayla's piece, but that it was both of ours, and so we needed to be able to have both of our voices heard in a productive way. As we continued the meeting with Miriam, she did say that she thought that we were in a good place for the stage that we were in and for me to not worry so much about the deadlines yet, because we still had some time. She also told Ayla, after the latter expressed not knowing if the piece would be good or not, and I think also seeing my disappointment in Ayla's comment, that she needed to have confidence in the work that we have created, out of respect for each other and for our cast.

During the next rehearsal that we had with our cast, we first shared Miriam's feedback with them, and then asked what they felt we should do next. We told them that we could either go through the script together, seeing what scenes were unclear and what we possibly didn't need, or we could start running them and see what came of that. The majority of our cast voted to sit down with the script, and so this is what we ended up doing for the next three hours.

Looking back, I truly believe that this rehearsal was both one of the most painful and most productive ones out of the entire process, for several different reasons. One of the reasons why it was painful was because our cast was being brutally honest with us. Much to our surprise, there were several scenes or parts of the play that they didn't understand, and hearing this for the first time was very difficult, because we had thought that we made it clear that we wanted everyone to be on the same page at all times. Regardless, I needed to swallow

my pride and realize how helpful it was to answer their questions, and to also have them help to answer, if they were questions that we didn't have definite answers to. For example, Leon asked us why a wedding. He only knew it was a wedding because that was what we had told them, and other than that, he didn't understand its significance. Ayla, I think feeling self-conscious about our choices and beginning to question them, said that she did not even know why it was a wedding and said in front of the cast that maybe we should change it.

I at this point in the rehearsal had been listening to our cast tell us all of the things that they thought were wrong and/or did not understand about the piece that I had worked so hard on, and even though I knew that this was all very helpful, the comment from Ayla had made me reach by breaking point, as I felt that her not supporting our ideas was causing a crack in our strong foundation. I then explained, trying to remain calm, why it was extremely significant to *me* that it was a wedding for two major reasons: 1. A wedding is an event that a lot of the time you attend out of obligation. It is a societal structure where you often feel awkward and don't know the people around you. I felt that this related to Limbo, because there too lived individuals who may not know why they are there (on a deeper level than not being baptized) or what will happen next. 2. Weddings are events that have a certain structure or sequence of events, but within that structure often come extreme chaos, where I think some of the time is due to the powers that be trying too hard to keep things running smoothly. Tying in this idea to Limbo, there are rules of the world, such as that you cannot physically touch while fighting. There may come a time though, when emotions are no longer able to be suppressed, revealing the true insanity and absurdity of the situation.

I think that once I explained this, Ayla, who I could tell was also overwhelmed by what our cast was sharing, began to see that just because they had questions did not mean that they felt what we had was not good, but that it just needed to be made clear, so that we were all on the same page. Our cast was also was receptive to this, and began to share their own

thoughts as to why Limbo was a wedding. We continued the rehearsal by going through the scripts, each suggesting what we thing could be cut or needed to stay put, and we ended up shaving off a substantial amount of time from the piece.

Our goal for the next rehearsal was to start running and piece from start to finish but to also take the time to work out the kinks of the edits that had been made together. The next time that Miriam came to watch a rehearsal, which was on the fourteenth of February and a little less than a week before tech started, she told us much to our contentment, that the piece as a whole was much cleaner and much more clear. She also really liked how playful it was becoming and could tell that some serious bonding had undergone between the last time she saw our work and now, because it was evident that the cast as a whole was more unified, as individual actors made choices telling that they were more trusting of each other. She did say that there was more that each actor can do to add to their characters and to make their journeys more clear, so this was something we shared and gave our cast each their own homework to work on.

Chapter 3: Production

On February 18th, we had our first tech week rehearsal in the Luma Theater at the Fisher Performing Arts Center. Working on the performance stage and seeing our set for the first time, the tables, chairs, partition and piano were all available to us, and we struck everything with glow in the dark tape so that they were prepared for us before each performance. We also worked on the transition of moving the previous circle's set pieces off and moving ours on. This was a bit challenging at first, as it was timed, but after repeating it once or twice, it became easier and eventually was not something that required much thought.

The next tech rehearsal in Luma was considered "Full Tech," since we were in costume, had all of our props and set pieces, as well as sound and lighting. There was an

issue with the delivery of one of our costumes, which were black robes that we wanted everyone to wear during Limbo scenes. They never ended up arriving on time, and so we worked around it. I think despite this set back, the other costumes that we had chosen from the rack room at Bard ended up working out for the best. We had certain accessories that were changed, such as a hat or hair pieces, but most of us stayed in the same clothing throughout. There was also some confusion with the recorded music that we had during the piece, as the files I had sent to the sound coordinator did not go through, and so I needed to explain it to our stage manager as we were moving through the tech rehearsal. Also just trying to make sure that we were all prepared at the top of each scene was challenging, since we needed to make sure that all of the props were accounted for and costume changes, no matter how minimal, ran smoothly.

The problems that came up during tech week made me realize what it was like to be a director during the production week of a major event and all of the responsibilities that putting up a theater festival. I always imagined what it would be like to be the stage manager or director when I was in my high school's productions, imagining all of the organizing and planning that it must have taken, but never truly knew what it was like until this experience. I have a whole new respect for directors, as well as all of the people working behind the scenes who have so much to keep track of.

We had some time after each tech rehearsal to talk to our cast, normally as we were getting out of costume, and did end up holding one or two separate rehearsals outside of the required times that we spent in Luma. It was very difficult trying to manage our time during this week, as we were called almost every evening during the week prior to the performances. In addition, two of our cast members were in other senior project pieces, so when they were not with us, they were needed by their other directors. I remember the main notes that we had for our adviser and from the production team during tech week was to project more and to

take more time when giving dialogue. We were also told to make all movements and expressions grander, so that they could be seen by all audience members, no matter where they were seated.

When the first performance was upon us, I remember feeling completely exhausted from the long week we had just had, as well as very nervous. Oddly, I also felt energized at the thought of sharing the final product of our work with an audience. Before each performance, we would gather our cast together and do a short physical and vocal warm-up. We then did a love circle, which was something that we ended many of our rehearsals with as well. During this circle, we all went around and said something that we loved, either about each other, the piece, or something unrelated, such as “my cat” or “cheese.” We were also all physically connected during this, either by holding hands or with our arms around each other.

I remember before our final performance we all said a little something about what the project has meant for us, and I was completely moved by the touching things that my cast said that I could barely pull myself together before I had to go on stage. Jewel shared how this process had allowed her to forget about the difficulties she was facing outside of school and just to be freed from it all during our Limbo rehearsals meant so much to her. Ariel also said something similarly, and also that we collectively created something so unique, yet addressed emotions and situations that the audience could relate to. I also remember Leon saying, “We’ve made a lot of fake people and fake love, but what’s come out of isn’t fake at all, because we’ve grown real love for each other.”

Everything that was said made the countless hours of rehearsal, loss of sleep, and all other obstacles along the way completely worth it, because I knew that we would always have the wonderful memory of creating art together. Having had inspired my cast members, all of whom were younger than me and many will be doing their own senior projects within a

year or two, was the greatest feeling, and made me realize how rewarding it was to be able to help others through my creative outlet.

The feedback that we received from our audience members was surreal. I was overwhelmed by the amount of praise we received, where I was told by friends and family, and many complete strangers how impressed they were by the amount of talent our actors had, as well as how hard they laughed during the performance. This comment was something that caught me by surprise, since we had been so caught up in rehearsing for so long and had no idea that a lot of our content was funny. Hearing not only soft chuckles, but deep, gut-wrenching cackles coming from the audience during the shows was so satisfying, and I could tell that, in the moment, we were all feeding off this energy and thriving because of it. We were also applauded for the music in our piece, all of which was written by Ayla and I. This is something that I am very proud of, and again, am grateful to our cast for their flexibility and their willingness to catch anything that we threw at them.

Taking the time to reflect in the weeks following the final performance, I feel that that I've learned so much from this experience, where certain lessons stick out in my memory. First and foremost, I feel that I now understand the true definition of collaboration and the elements that make the latter successful. In the artistic world, collaboration happens on many different levels and disciplines, and as far as this project was concerned, it was necessary to both give and receive feedback from my cast, my advisers, and my peers. It was also vital to do so gracefully, despite desperately trying to not allow judgments or pride get in the way of seeing the importance behind this part of the process, which in our case, allowed the piece to move forward to what it became.

Also being that it was a theater production, I gained knowledge in balancing the tasks at hand as a director, actor, composer and writer, along with all of the scheduling and

administrative responsibilities that came with putting on a production with an ensemble through an undergraduate theater department.

Having to persevere even during times of difficulty during this process, whether it be writing blocks, disagreements with my creative partner or issues that arose during production week, I feel that I have become more resilient because of it, both as an artist and as a person. I often needed to take a step back in order to be my own outside eye and realize what was and was not worth getting upset over. At the end of the day, or at the end of the last curtain call I should say, I was extremely proud of the work I put in, and also of all of the people that made this process possible, especially my professors, my partner, Ayla, and our wonderful cast. I will always be appreciative to this institution for being a place where the arts are not only supported, but are encouraged and held at the same level of scholarship as any other subject. Graduating with a Bachelors of Arts degree from the Theater & Performance department at Bard College, I have no doubt that my education and all that I have learned from this project will allow me to achieve my greatest goals and aspirations.

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Limbo Limbo Limbo
an original play

by

Lauren D'Ottavio and Ayla Miller

Original actors from opening, February 2016

Luma Theater, Bard College

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY

Lauren D'Ottavio as Norah

Ayla Miller as Moriah

Jewel Evans as Virginia

Max Green as Virgil

Leon Gonzalez as Louis/chorus

Emily Kuper as Patsy/chorus

Ariel Gilooly as Horace/chorus

Scene 1

(At the Barren wasteland that is Limbo. VIRGIL addresses audience downstage SL. Repetitive piano chords begin playing in the background that sounds like the opening of a campy musical. Front scrim is down, silhouettes of bodies seen in background)

VIRGIL

Hello. And welcome to Limbo. It's not much, but it's home. It's your home, too. (He glares meaningfully at audience) By a show of hands, how many of you are baptized Christians? Good for you! You folks are safe, congratulations. The rest of us though, sorry to tell ya, this is it. We're only here because we weren't baptized and because we didn't "take Jesus as our savior." God just didn't know where to put us. He was confused, naturally. We technically haven't done anything wrong, so God felt bad torturing us eternally. So what's the guy to do? What he *did* was he real quick whipped up this special place. Real accommodating. Thanks God. (Pause)

(line cues scrim to rise. Actors are now seated) So now folks I'd like to introduce some of our limbo dwellers (Virgil introduces characters)....So how do we feel about this profoundly unfair situation? Some of us are going mad. Some of us have mastered apathy. And some of us think we're still on Earth, doing laundry and going to work, eating pineapple upside-down cake like we always did.

MORIAH *enters, eating pineapple upside-down cake and mumbling to herself, lost and confused, searching in vain for a place to sit down. VIRGIL snatches away her cake. Music turns minor.*

VIRGIL

(*Music picks up again.*) There isn't much to do here, so we find ways to entertain ourselves. Sometimes we sing.

MORIAH

(Singing) La-la -la

CHORUS

(singing) La-la-la

VIRGIL

And to top it off, every day is a wedding! Wedding reception, to be precise. (slightly sinister)
So without further a due, let's get started, shall we?

Scene 2

(This line cues music to stop abruptly. Lights up on white washed wedding scene. Six bare chairs and three bare tables with floppy centerpieces and balloons are in view in the shadows.)

(Virgil enters and begins slowly, finally breaking the awkwardness, same spot SL)

Virgil

Thank you all for coming out and joining us on this very special day, celebrating our new couple in the loveliest reception venue on this side of hell. The Grand at Limbo Square has provided a special spot for us all to dance the night away. But first- Can I have drum roll *please*. (sad drum roll)

And now, for the first time, let's give a warm...cold round of applause for –

VIRGINIA

Oh, Jesus Christ.

VIRGIL

- Mr. and Mrs. Aeneas.

Song 1: Mr. and Mrs. Aeneas

Mr. and Mrs. Aeneas are getting married today (1x)

We're happy for the celebration, happy for today (1x)

We're so happy happy happy happy for today! (1x)

VIRGIL

(awkwardly, gesturing behind him for the music to pick up again). Okay, then... Well at this time folks, we're gonna have our first game of the night! Musical chairs! (Virgil sets out 1 or 2 chairs. Chorus members play musical chairs with Norah playing only one chord before stopping.)

VIRGIL

Alright, ladies and gents of limbo, now is the time for our dinner hour, so the servers will be coming around to take your order. In the meantime, we're gonna REALLY get this party started. You know what's coming folks, don't ya? That's right- We're gonna start off with the classic, insanely repetitive, but somehow still existing, cha cha slide, ya'll. ("Cha Cha slide" begins to play) So get your anabaptized bon bons out here and shake what your mama gave ya.

VIRGIL

Alright that's enough! (Music stops abruptly) Break time. (everyone freezes except Norah and Virginia)

NORAH

Virginia, why don't you ask one of them to dance?

VIRGINIA

Maybe when I used to have legs instead of these ol' lumps that barely move anymore I'd ask one of those old sorry sack of souls to dance. But I was never a good dancer, anyway. You, on the other hand, Norah, you were a triple threat! You could sing, dance, act AND play –

NORAH

I guess you're right. But that was a very, very long time ago.

(Pause, music fades)

I tell ya, though, I remember it like it was yesterday.

(Blackout. "Amapola" by Benny Goodman begins to play. Virgil comes out front SR)

VIRGIL

Norah has quite a different story folks. You see she had a very different life than this hell hole she finds herself in now. Let's take a look, shall we?

(Lights up on couple dancing in a lively 1940s swing club scene. Music lowers and focus shifts to dialogue taking place on SR)

VIRGINIA

(enters SR with Louis, scoping out the scene) Dear God in heaven, what kinda shit show is this? Now, sweet cousin, where can a young thang like me get some hard liquor?

(LOUIS hasn't stopped staring at Norah)

Helloooooo, earth to Louis Parker! Have I become invisible to every man on this earth, including my own flesh and blood?

LOUIS

What's that, darlin? Oh sorry, Virginia, I was just watching the dancing is all.

VIRGINIA

Yeah, you sure were. That's my best friend over there you're drooling over. If you'd take your balls off of her for one minute maybe I'd introduce you.

LOUIS

Really! I mean, uh, oh really? That'd be cool. I mean if ya want, Gin. It's whatever you want to do.

VIRGINIA

Uh huh, sure. (yelling!) NORAH! HEY NORAH!!!

(Norah and Horace come walking over).

Norah, darling, this is my cousin, Louis. Louis Parker. Norah-Louis, Louis-Norah. Now, my dears, it's about time for me to find myself a drank. Before I blow. Cheers. (Virginia joins dancers, tries to find the bar, mingles with Virgil)

LOUIS

It's just Louis (pronounces it like Loo-ee). Very nice to meet you, Ms. Norah. (kisses her hand)

NORAH

Oh my! Well, it's nice to meet you too, Mr. Par –

HORACE

I'm Norah's boyfriend. *Fiancé*, actually. (holds out hand to shake)

LOUIS

(after pause, shakes hand) Oh well it's nice to meet you too, Norah's *boyfriend*.

NORAH

Excuse him, Mr. Parker. This is Horace. Horace Bradley (gives Horace a look) I'm getting pretty tired myself. Think I might head in for the night, but it was nice to meet you, Mr. Parker (Norah walks to grab her purse at table, Horace chases after, Louis still staring).

HORACE

Aw, darling, come on, don't be like that. I didn't mean what I said -

NORAH

Horace, I've had about enough for tonight. Now, please, let me go. (gathers things and walks toward the door SL. Louis catches her as she leaves)

LOUIS

Hey, ugh, Ms. Norah? Everything ok? (she keeps walking) I actually had a few questions for you, if you had a minute... I was wondering if you could maybe tell me where you –

NORAH

Aw I'm sorry darlin, but I really must be going. Have a great night. (Norah exits SR)

VIRGINIA

(back from the bar) Now *this* is what I call a hot toddy. (looks at Louis) What the hell happened to you, man?

LOUIS

I...I think I'm in love with that woman. (runs after Norah)

Scene 4.

("Sing Sing Sing" music comes on during transition back to Limbo. Blackout. Virgil speaks with a spot SL during transition to Moriah flashback.)

VIRGIL

What will happen to Norah? Will she stay with controlling Horace? Will heartstruck Louis profess his love at first sight for her? You'll just have to wait and see folks. Now this is Moriah. She grew up with a strict Catholic mother who insisted she devote her life to baby Jesus. Moriah, though, had some beliefs of her own.

Scene 5

(Music stops. Lights up on pink lit flashback scene with Moriah and her mother.)

MORIAH'S MOTHER

You are to memorize this entire song, do you understand me?

MORIAH

Yes, mom.

MORIAH'S MOTHER

Every single word of it! I'll be back to check on you soon. (Presses on radio which cues piano playing to begin, then leaves)

(Norah begins to play and chorus shuffles on behind Moriah and begins to sing. After first verse, Moriah runs to radio and cues Slayer's "Antichrist" to come on. After about a minute mother comes running on. Beginning of next line cues music to stop abruptly.)

MORIAH'S MOTHER

Moriah, what on earth are you doing? (chorus gets up and runs off stage) This Satan music you're listening to! You will rot in hell if you keep this up. Now get back to work!

MORIAH

But mom!

Scene 6.

(blackout. Virgil comes out, addresses audience.)

VIRGIL

So as you saw folks, Moriah had a mind of her own when she was among the living. Let's see how things are going back in hell. I have a feeling it's not all fun and games this time.

VIRGINIA

(Light up. sees Moriah walking back to table. Looks disheveled). There you are, Mo, where the hell you been?

MORIAH

Where have I been? I've been *here*, just like everyone else! Can't you just shut up, Virginia godamnit! (starts to physically fight with Virginia).

VIRGINIA

Oh really? You're really gonna try and do this with me? I could take your ragedy ass bones to the ground in a second. (the two have a fight and end up rolling onto the dance floor).

VIRGIL

Now what the hell is going down over here? Excuse me, ladies! No fighting allowed please! Dear God, you're gonna hurt yourselves. (debates for a moment) But what do I care- what difference does it make anyway? Shame on you both.

NORAH

I just don't understand why you two can't get along after all these years. I mean look at us, we're not young anymore. We're a bunch of old bats stuck in this world with no way out and you two are fighting? Aren't there better things you can be filling your time with, like trying to enjoy the wedding?

VIRGINIA

What exactly do you think we're supposed to be doing Norah? And what are you talking about, "enjoying" the wedding? What wedding? Your wedding? Is that what this is about? Wake Up, Norah! We're dead. You said it yourself, we're stuck here, and there's no joy in sight. Our lives are over and they've been over for a very long time.

NORAH

Well don't you think we should at least... (begins to cry)

VIRGINIA

Norah, I didn't mean it. I know you miss him. I shouldn't have said....

NORAH

No- everything you said was true. There's no point. I just miss him and wish I could go back and change it.

Scene 7.

(Blackout. "Moonlight Serenade" by Glenn Miller plays during transition. Virgil addresses audience)

VIRGIL

Who is this "him" that Norah is referring to? Horace? Louis? Let's take a look.

(Lights up, music lowers. Virginia and friend Patsy are helping her get ready.)

PATSY

What do you think of my hair, Norah? Is it too big?

NORAH

(obviously upset) Oh, no honey. I think you look beautiful.

(There's a knock at the door. Music stops.)

VIRGINIA

Who is it?

HORACE

(urgently) It's Horace. Can I talk to Norah, please.

PATSY

Horace, Bradley! You know you're not supposed to see the bride afore the weddin' its bad luck!

NORAH

No, it's okay darlin. I have a feeling I know what he's gonna say.

VIRGINIA

Now what the hell is that supposed to mean?

NORAH

Just go. I'll be fine.

(Virginia gives her a concerned look then exits with Patsy. Virginia gives Horace a look of warning before she lets him in).

HORACE

Aw, sweetie. You look gorgeous! (Leans in to kiss her but she shies away)

NORAH

What are you doing here, Horace?

HORACE

Now, honey, its no big thang. I just have..

NORAH

Go, on, Horace.

HORACE

The fact is, Norah, is that I haven't always been true to you. There was a time that you left,
even after I told you not to-

NORAH

Well that's because I don't have to listen to everything you say to. You're not the boss of me,
even though you think-

HORACE

I cheated on you, Norah.

(pause. She looks at him. Somewhat knowing but also shocked to hear him say it out loud)

But it's okay, now, you see, because I confessed! And I've made myself pure for you. Wow!
I feel a lot better now! I don't know why I was so nervous to tell you! –

NORAH

Horace, I'm leaving you.

HORACE

Excuse me?

NORAH

And it's not even because of what you did. I'm leaving you because I would rather live in sin
with someone that I love than someone that doesn't give a shit about me and that. So, I'm
sorry Horace, but this is goodbye.

HORACE

(grabs her and shakes her aggressively) Norah, are you gonna marry that *%\$#@ Parker?

NORAH

(slaps him and runs off)

Scene 8

(Blackout. Pachabelle's "Canon" comes on. Louis meets Norah center stage. Music lowers when Virgil begins speaking.)

VIRGIL

Dearly beloved, we gather here today to celebrate the love of two very special people. We pray, dear lord that their love will carry them through all times of difficulty as well as times of joy. Louis Parker, do you take this woman to be your wife, to have and to hold, through sickness and in health from this day forward?

LOUIS

I do.

VIRGIL

And do you, Norah Gamler, take this man to have and to hold, for richer or for poor, through sickness and in health, from this day forward, to the end of your days?

NORAH

I do.

VIRGIL

You may kiss the bride. (Louis lifts veil, they kiss.)

(scene falls apart. Everything is stripped away, lights dim. Music gets louder as Louis and Virgil exit, Virgil takes Norah's veil, leaving her alone. Music fades away. There's a pause from when the music stops and her solo begins)

Song 3: "Baptize Me"

If I were a little girl again, I'd ask my parents why they didn't love me
Cause if they had they surely would have dunked me.
Not being dunked has caused me so much pain
And one day when my love is gone I'll refrain
Trapped in this world all on my own
My love is gone, only because

They dunked you, in the holy water.
They dunked you why couldn't they do it to me.
If only I'd know that was all that it took
But God is one deceptive crook.
And now I'm here and you're up there
and we'll never know what could have been.
Oh, it's not fair.
Baptize me slowly, baptize me fast, baptize me any which way (chorus joins)
As long as I'm baptized, I won't be lonely.
I'll have my love by my side, and it'll be alright.

Scene 9.

VIRGIL

(Blackout. Virgil to audience. "Baptize me Instrumental" comes on.) So as we saw it folks, Norah did decide to leave that asshole and marry the man she loved, even if it meant not being able to spend an eternity together. Now let's see how Moriah reacts in the face of pressure, although this time, it's not coming from her mother.

(Lights up. Kids each telling their Baptism stories. Improvised. Eventually Moriah walks in, interrupting them)

KIDS

Ewww! BAPTIZED KIDS ONLY! BAPTIZED KIDS ONLY!

MORIAH

Baptism is stupid, okay? It doesn't mean anything! How could you think that it *actually* washes away your sins? It's merely a symbolic ritual! UGH.

KIDS

You're gonna end up in Hell.

MORIAH

I'd rather be in Hell than in this dumb cafeteria with you!

Scene 10.

(Blackout. "Medieval Siege Battle" Music comes on. Lights up, Virgil sits at his desk, furiously writing The Aeneid.)

VIRGIL

UGH! (war sounds fade before chorus begins)

CHORUS

Virgil, are you done with that poem yet?

VIRGIL

Nooooo.

CHORUS

You've been working on it for eleven years!

VIRGIL

I need at least three more years. It has to be perfect! Perfect. Perfect. This is about the fate of Rome, okay? (He continues to struggle)

(chorus comes out with unwritten pages and begins to chase him. Then they form a line and stand in front of the audience and stare at them for an uncomfortably long time. They circle around Virgil)

CHORUS

HEY THERE VIRGIL

WE'RE INSIDE YOUR BRAIN

WE'RE THE LITTLE GUYS WHO DRIVE YOU INSANE

LOOK AT THESE PAGES; THEY'RE ALL BLANK

YOU'LL NEVER FINISH, AND WE'RE THE ONES TO THANK

VIRGIL

It's unpublishable!

CHORUS

YOU'LL NEVER FINISH

HAHAHAHAHA (REPEATED)

(Chorus continues to laugh as they drag Virgil away from his book and into their dance)

VIRGIL

No! I have to finish! The ending's not right! I really must edit for a few more years... (he is pulled offstage by the CHORUS)

CHORUS

BURN IT, BURN IT, BURN IT, BURN IT (gradually getting louder)

VIRGIL

DON'T PUBLISH THAT POEM WITHOUT MY CONSENT! (sobbing)

Scene 11.

(Blackout. "Walking after midnight" by Patsy Kline comes on. Virgil comes out and addresses audience. Music lowers.)

VIRGIL

So there ya have it, folks. A look into what brought me here. (Pause, pondering) Enough about me, though. Let's see what landed grumpy ol' Virginia in this place she obviously loves so much.

VIRGINIA'S MOTHER

(stirring a pot) Hey honey bun, you know what I just keep forgettin' to do?

VIRGINIA'S FATHER

(rocking baby doll, meant to be Virginia) What's that suga pie?

VIRGINIA'S MOTHER

I just haven't gotten around to it yet, but I really, truly, need to call Reveren Michael and set up a time for little Virginia to get Bap –

(AG comes running on with a fake pineapple upside down cake . Cymbal crash sound effect comes on as prop hits mother's head, cutting her line short)

VIRGINIA'S FATHER

Suga pie? Suga pie!!!! (throws baby and runs to MOTHER) Suga, suga wake up! Wake up!

VIRGINIA'S MOTHER

(coming to slowly) Oh my gawd, what was that?

VIRGINIA'S FATHER

(looks at what fell) What the -? It looks like.. like pineapple upside down cake fell from the ceiling and knocked you right out, darlin!

VIRGINIA'S MOTHER

Oh, THAT'S where that silly thing went. (grabs it and starts to eat it). Honey weren't we talking about something? And where's Virginia?

Scene 12.

(Blackout. Virginia comes on and stands center stage while her solo music begins.)

Song 4: Virginia solo-"I'm Gonna Try".

My life is worthless (2x)

The only time I ever had any say

Was when a slumbag asked me to go away

But I told him I wasn't that kind of girl

But now I wonder if it would have mattered.

Oh my life is worthless, I've known it for a very long time

But still I wonder if I'd been happy, if that would have been such a crime

And if my mother had just remembered to call the fucking Reverend

And if that piece of shit fruit would have stayed on the tree

Oh maybe I'd be free.

(spoken) You know what? Maybe I still have time? Maybe I can still change my place here?

I mean I can't leave, that's obvious, but maybe I can change my state of mind?

Yeah that's it!

(singing) I'm gonna try! I'm gonna try!

(Blackout. Instrumental of "Im gonna try" plays. White Lights up, music fades away. All actors seated except Virgil, off SL)

VIRGINIA

This coffee tastes like filth.

MORIAH

What? Yeah, you're right- it does need more milk.

(Virginia draws arm back as to swing at Moriah but catches herself, trying to be more positive after her revelation).

VIRGIL

(yelling) A miracle has happened! A MIRACLE HAS HAPPENED!!!!

(spot lights shining on the characters, chorus walking around, confused at what's happening).

PATSY

They're letting us in!

JIM

God?

DANTE (AG's voice from microphone off stage)

It is I, the great Dante!

VIRGINIA

Oh come on guys, we've heard his shpeal before.

DANTE

Ha! You're right! No one is opening the gate for you. I am here to tell you all that you have been spoiled here. You see, there are millions beneath you that are suffering- Those who are enduring eternal punishments at a level of pain that you cannot imagine.

VIRGINIA

Well that's easy for you to say, Mr. Dumbo! You're not the one whos been stuck here for thousands of years

Moriah

Hey! I'm no bimbo!

VIRGIL

(jumping up and down, trying to strangle Dante) I'll show you what it's like down here when I cut your wings off with my bare hands!

DANTE

I understand your lives are not easy, but you are *free* in this limbo to do as you please. There is no one setting you on fire, no one starving you or cutting your limbs off. Even though you shouldn't be here, the fact is that you are, so you all ought to try to make a life here. (Pause. Starts to sink in for characters) And with that, I have one more thing to say.

(Everyone freezes-spot on Virgil addressing audience for last time)

VIRGIL

So there you have it folks. This is Limbo. It's not much, but it's home. And remember, it's your home too.

(actors unfreeze)

Come on- you know the drill. Again!

(song begins with same music as "Mr. and Mrs. Aneas" to show the cycle is repeating itself.

Dante: I know this is a place that you really don't like

But at least you're not on fire or getting stabbed in the eye.

Everyone here is losing their minds

And this is why theres no place like Limbo

Moriah: I know this sounds strange, but I really don't mind

I actually kind of like it, and I get cake all the time

And really, whats not to like about Limbo

Norah: I guess I know I'll never get baptized

Heaven is just too small for me

But my friends are all here and I'll see him again

I just know it

Virginia: I hate how they smell and I hate how they dress

And I hate how they look and act and think and talk....

But I'm starting to see theres no place like Limbo

Everyone: Yes this is a place that we really don't like

But it's our home and we're not getting stabbed in the eye

There's never really anywhere new to go

But don't you see theres no place like Limbo

("Curtain call music" comes on. When Virgil yells "Break time", music stops)

Everyone: Limbo limbo limbo limbo- no place like Limbo!

VIRGIL

Break time! (Blackout.)

THE END!